

# 2016

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Washington  
Department of  
**FISH and  
WILDLIFE**

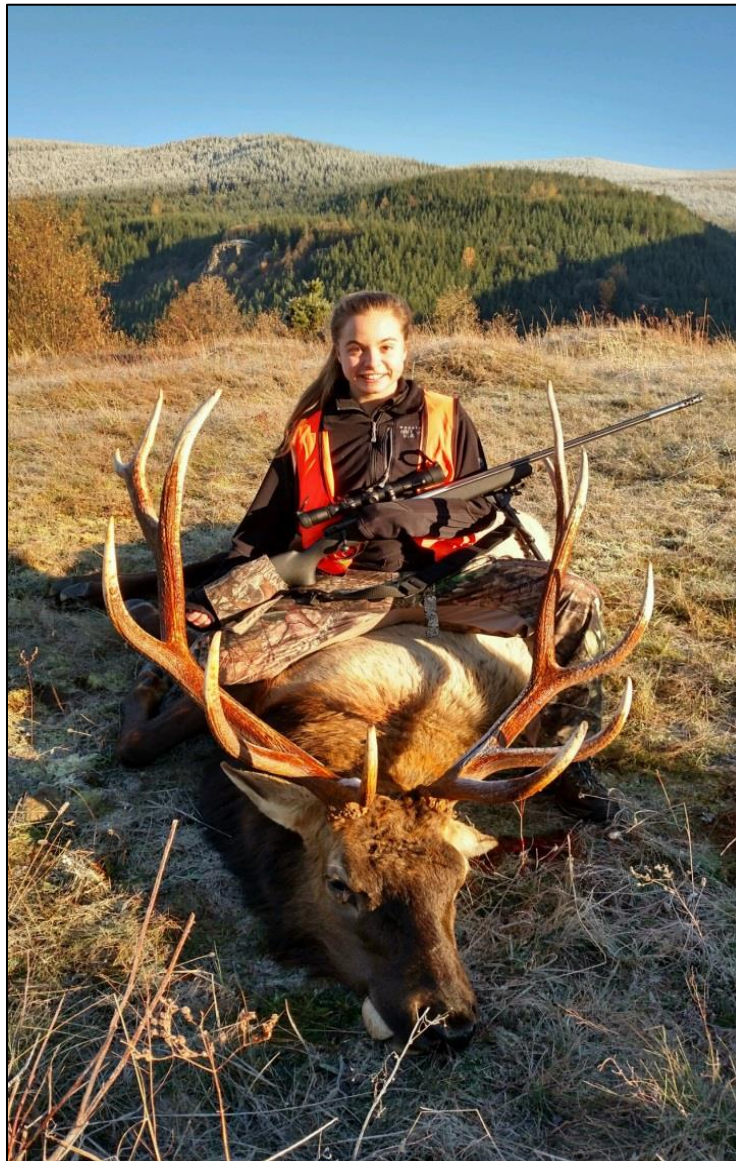


Photo by Sam Kolb

## District 10 Hunting Prospects

Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties

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## DISTRICT 10 GENERAL OVERVIEW

District 10 is located in southwestern Washington and includes Lewis, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties. Game management units (GMUs) in this district include 501 (Lincoln), 503 (Randle), 504 (Stella), 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 513 (South Rainier), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 522 (Loo-Wit), 524 (Margaret), 530 (Ryderwood), 550 (Coweeman), and 556 (Toutle). The topography of this wide area ranges from maritime rolling hills in Wahkiakum County to Cascade peaks in Lewis County.

A high percentage of this district is in private ownership, which presents a variety of access options and challenges. The recent trend is for timber companies to limit public access to their land or sell access permits for hunting seasons to a limited number of participants.

Understanding the recreational access policies of individual timber companies is an important step in planning your hunt. Recreational access information is typically available on timber company websites or by calling access hotlines. A list of recreational access websites and hotlines maintained by private industrial timber companies is included at the end of this document. It is always a good idea to obtain a map from the landowner where you wish to hunt.

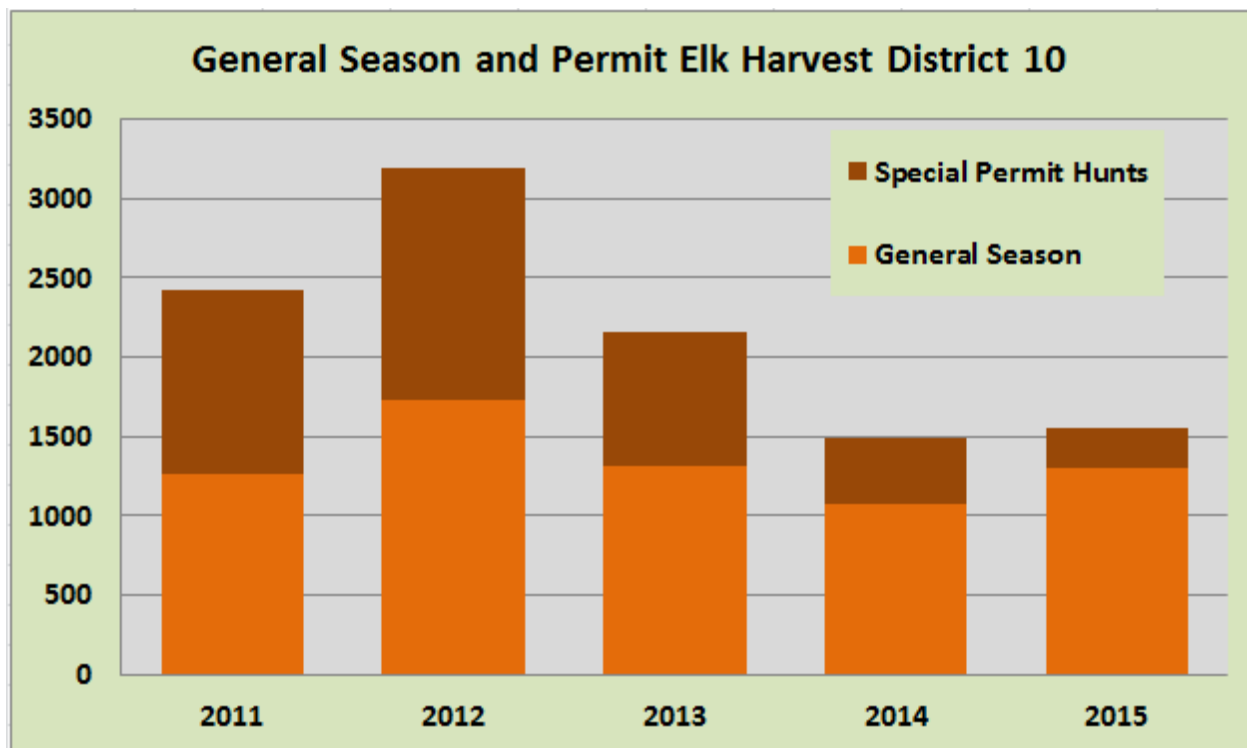
Weyerhaeuser owns a significant amount of land in District 10. Major changes to hunting access implemented in 2015 include the requirement to purchase an access permit to hunt on all Weyerhaeuser land, including their St. Helens Tree Farm (GMUs 550, 520, 524, and 556). As of this writing, access permits are being sold for \$300. Information about permits for recreational access to Weyerhaeuser land, including maps, can be found [here](#) or by emailing [WeyerhaeuserColumbiaTimberlandsRecreation@weyerhaeuser.com](mailto:WeyerhaeuserColumbiaTimberlandsRecreation@weyerhaeuser.com) or calling 1-866-636-6531.

Other industrial timber company lands are generally open to public hunting, but may have limited motorized vehicle access. Other major industrial forest landowners in District 10 include Hancock Forest Management, Port Blakely, Sierra Pacific, Green Diamond (permit fee access), and Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management. Access to these lands may be impacted in August, September, and – in some cases – October due to high fire danger. More information about hunting opportunities on private land can be found on the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's (WDFW) [Private Lands webpage](#), on page 96 of the Big Game pamphlet, or at the [GoHunt mapping](#) site.

Public land in the district includes WDFW's [Cowlitz](#) and [Mount St. Helens](#) Wildlife Areas, the Gifford Pinchot National Forest in eastern Lewis and Cowlitz counties, and state land managed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) scattered throughout all three counties. These are public lands open to public access. Contact the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Cowlitz Valley Ranger District at 360-497-1100 or visit their [website](#). Information about DNR managed lands can be obtained by contacting the Castle Rock DNR office at 360-577-2025 or visiting the [Department's website](#).

## ELK

District 10 has historically been among the leaders in statewide harvest of elk. The highest general season harvests in 2015 occurred in GMUs 520 (Winston), 506 (Willapa Hills), 530 (Ryderwood), and 550 (Coweeman). There are also many permit hunts in District 10, which are offered to manage the elk population, address agricultural damage caused by elk, and provide recreational opportunity. Additionally, two GMUs, 522 (Loo-Wit) and 556 (Toutle), are permit-only for both cow and bull elk. In 2015, a total of 1,306 elk were harvested during the general season in addition to 245 elk harvested by permit in District 10. Elk found west of Interstate 5 are considered to be of the Roosevelt sub-species, while elk in the Cascade Mountain Range are of mixed origin. Specifically, Cascade elk are a genetic combination of native Roosevelt elk and introduced Rocky Mountain elk. Hunters should keep in mind that in either area, a 5-point bull is likely an adult representative of the species.



### SIGNIFICANT CHANGES FOR 2016

#### GMU 524 Margaret Elk

While no new hunting regulations are in play for the 2016 season, hunters should be aware of a change that is still in effect from last year. GMU 524 (Margaret) changed to general season hunting for bull elk instead of being managed as a permit-only GMU. Starting in 2015, general season bull hunts were offered to archers, muzzleloader hunters, and modern firearm hunters. The hunt dates correspond to the general season structure for western Washington and all user-

groups are under the 3-point antler restriction. Antlerless opportunity for Margaret is still managed on a special permit basis.

Hunters should be aware that the easternmost portion of the Margaret GMU, located within the Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument, is closed to general season elk hunting. The portion of Margaret not open to general season hunting is identified by the Norway Pass Elk Area #5066. Elk hunting for all user groups in this area is now managed by special permit. For detailed information on the boundaries of Elk Area 5066 and specifics on elk hunting permits in this area, see the 2016 Big Game pamphlet.

### **Muzzleloader Elk**

As part of the statewide effort to provide additional elk hunting opportunity to muzzleloader elk hunters in 2015, many additional GMUs within District 10 are now open for general season muzzleloader hunts. GMUs 505 (Mossyrock), 506 (Willapa Hills), 510 (Stormking), 516 (Packwood), 520 (Winston), 524 (Margaret), which is discussed in detail above, and 550 (Coweeman) all offer early muzzleloader general seasons for 3-point or larger bulls during the October season.

### **ELK POPULATION INFORMATION**

Elk populations in the game management units comprising the Mount St. Helens elk herd area are down from historic highs reached during the mid-2000s. This population reduction was implemented per the objectives of the [St. Helens Elk Herd Plan](#). Liberal antlerless elk hunting opportunity, combined with some years of late winter and spring storms, have reduced the elk population in these GMUs. Antlerless hunting opportunity has been reduced accordingly and those hunters holding antlerless permits in 2016 should enjoy less-crowded conditions compared to years past.

The spring of 2016 survey of elk in the monitored portions of the St. Helens herd showed a modest increase in the population of elk. Additionally, the mild winters of 2014-15 and 2015-16 resulted in few winter mortalities on the annual survey of elk on the St. Helens Wildlife Area. These indicators point towards a productive elk hunting season during the 2016 hunt.

Survey information in the GMUs comprising the Willapa Hills herd is favorable as well. Surveys conducted in 2014 and repeated in 2016 indicate a stable or slightly increasing elk population in GMUs 506 Willapa Hills and 530 Ryderwood.

The general bull elk season is always challenging, but the District 10 elk population produces a harvest of more than 1,000 bull elk annually, and those hunters who put in the effort and remain focused may be rewarded with success.





Photo by Sam Kolb (WDFW)



Bull group in the St. Helens herd – Photo by Scott Mc Corquodale (WDFW)

### **Strategies in Situations of Restrictions Due to Fire Danger**

Early hunting season access for archery hunters is often complicated by hot weather and fire access closures. If that occurs, hunters should consider going west to GMUs 506 or 530 (Willapa Hills and Ryderwood), where blocks of state (DNR) forest lands are available. Another good choice during times of fire danger would be GMUs 513 (South Rainier) and 516

(Packwood), which are comprised mostly of national forest lands. These public lands almost always stay open during times of high fire danger, but be sure to check with land managers before heading to the field.

### **Elk Scouting Strategies**

Using the [GoHunt mapping](#) online tool to look at aerial photos to identify recent clearcuts and drainages is a good start for identifying areas to hunt. Pre-season scouting on the commercial tree farms is usually done by bike or on foot, as most areas will not be open to motorized access at that time. Motorized access and camping is available on state DNR lands unless there is high fire danger. Prospective elk hunters should keep in mind that the animals often prefer cooler, wetter areas during times of warmer weather, and are more often active during dawn and dusk.

### **Additional Resources for Those Interested in District 10 Elk**

[Annual harvest reports](#) and harvest statistics for deer and elk based on hunter reporting can be found on the WDFW website. For more information regarding elk management in WDFW Region 5 (Districts 9 and 10), see page 128 of the [2015 Elk Status and Trend Report](#) on the WDFW website.

### **BACTERIAL HOOF DISEASE**

Over the past decade, WDFW has received a growing number of reports of elk exhibiting hoof deformities in southwest Washington. This is a major concern for hunters, area residents, and state wildlife managers alike. Reports have been increasing in number and geographic scope, and hunters are regularly seeing and sometimes harvesting an elk with this condition. It has been noted in both males and females, old and very young animals, and in any hoof.

Through collaborative work with five independent diagnostic laboratories and epidemiological specialists within the USA and abroad, hooves from affected elk have been extensively examined and results have been reviewed by a 16-member technical panel of researchers and veterinarians. All evidence to date indicates that elk hoof disease is caused by treponeme infectious bacteria and appears to be very similar to a disease complex known as digital dermatitis (DD), the most prevalent infectious hoof disease of cattle, and, in some parts of the world, sheep and goats. Although many bacteria play a role in hoof disease, a type of spirochete belonging to the genus *Treponema* is the most common.

Treponeme-associated hoof disease (TAHD) in elk most closely resembles contagious ovine digital dermatitis (CODD) in sheep. Infection in elk hooves results in abnormal hoof growth, cavitating sole ulcers, and in severe cases, eventual sloughing of the hoof capsule. There is no evidence that the bacteria are harmful to humans, and tests have shown that the disease does not affect animals' meat or organs.

Microscopic examination of tissues, including meat, from elk affected by hoof disease has not revealed evidence of infection, inflammation, or any other indication that the meat is unsuitable for human consumption. In all animals inspected to date, the disease has been limited to the hooves, and the meat has been normal. Domestic animals severely affected by hoof disease are commonly slaughtered, and hoof disease in domestic animals does not cause federal meat inspectors to condemn the meat as unsuitable for human food. If the meat looks and smells normal, and if common sense and good hygiene are practiced during the harvesting, processing, and cooking, the meat is most likely safe to eat. For more information, please see the department's website at [Wild Game Meat Food Safety](#).

The primary area of TAHD infection is in the Cowlitz River Basin. However, suspected incidences of hoof disease occur in southwest Washington in ten counties and the disease affects both the Mount St. Helens and Willapa elk herds. Scientists believe environmental factors are important in disease initiation, and the bacteria likely persist in wet soils and are spread to new locations on the hooves of infected animals

Hunters should be aware to minimize the spread of the disease. The Department has implemented new regulations requiring hunters to leave the hooves of any elk taken in the affected area on site. See page 66 of the 2016 Big Game Hunting pamphlet for details on the regulation regarding leaving elk feet at the site of harvest in southwest Washington.

Wildlife managers currently do not know the prevalence of the disease, or its adverse effects on the population, and there is not a treatment plan or vaccine available at this time. WDFW continues to work towards a better understanding of the hoof disease situation for both the infected animals specifically and the elk population as a whole. Recent undertakings include a volunteer-based effort to determine the distribution and prevalence of the disease across the landscape and a WDFW research project to understand the possible effects of TAHD on elk survival and reproduction. If hunters harvest an elk with a collar, please call the phone number on the collar as soon as possible so it can be retrieved. Much more information can be found on page 66 in the pamphlet and on the department's [webpage](#). Hunters can help WDFW address this challenging wildlife management issue by reporting elk with hoof disease on the [online reporting tool](#).





Photo by Nicholle Stephens (WDFW)

## DEER

Several GMUs in District 10 are among the best in the state for black-tailed deer harvest. The highest 2015 general season buck harvests within District 10 occurred in GMUs 530 (Ryderwood), 501 (Lincoln), 520 (Winston), and 550 (Coweeman). The majority of the harvest occurs during general seasons for each user group, with a small portion of the harvest occurring during special permit seasons. For more information on deer in WDFW's Region 5 (Districts 10 and 9), see page 63 in the annual Game Status and Trend Report.

Black-tailed deer hunting is often best near the end of the general season, as conditions in heavily vegetated western Washington improve for stalking and moving through the woods quietly. The best opportunity often occurs during the late buck hunt, when favorable stalking and weather conditions combine with the breeding season or rut. The 2016 late buck season runs November 17-20. Black-tailed deer generally favor dense vegetation and have small home ranges. The most successful hunters study the area carefully and move very slowly, constantly searching for deer.

Black-tailed deer populations are stable in District 10. The annual harvest of more than 2,000 bucks has been typical for many years. The mild winters of 2014/15 and 2015/16 should mean excellent survival for all segments of the deer population and bodes well for the 2016 fall hunting season.

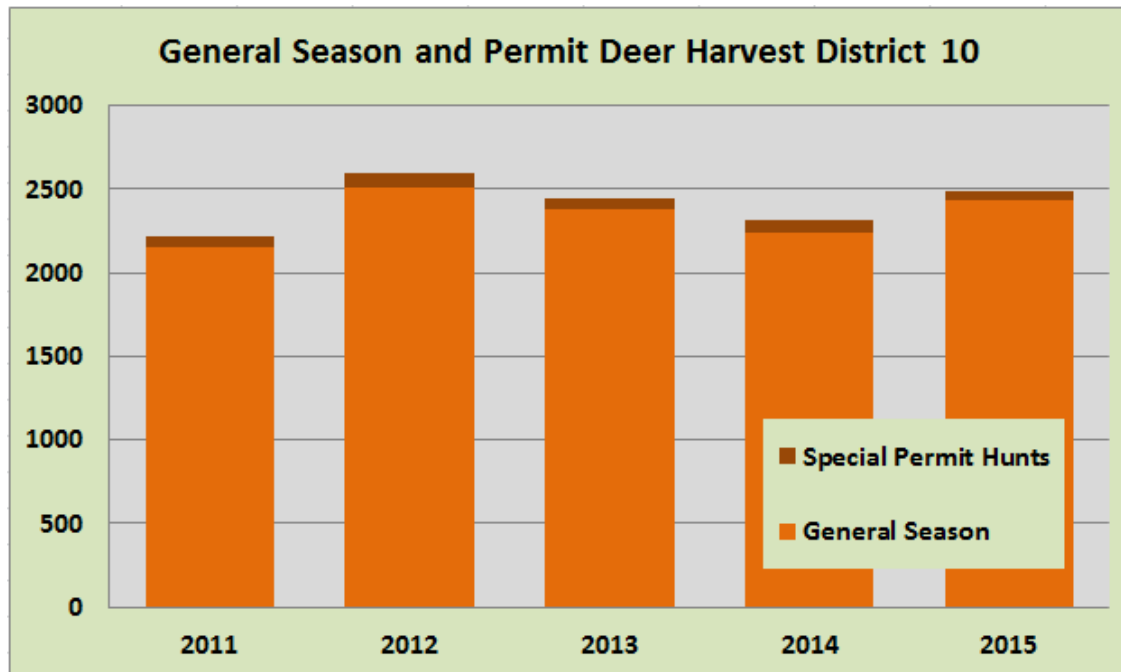


Photo by Gary Bell (WDFW)

## BEAR

District 10 makes up part of both the South Cascades (GMUs 503, 505, 510, 513, 516, 520, 550, and 556) and Coastal (GMUs 501, 504, 506, and 530) black bear hunt zones for the fall bear hunting season. In the Coastal hunt zone, the season runs from August 1 to November 15. In the South Cascades hunt zone, the season starts on August 15 and runs through November 15.

Harvest numbers and hunter success for 2015 in the South Cascades and Coastal zones were 99 (2.7% success) and 174 (5.7% success), respectively. For more information on the management of black bears in Washington, including the Coastal and South Cascades management zones, see page 230 of the annual Status and Trend report.

Successful bear hunters must submit a premolar tooth. See page 69 of the Big Game pamphlet for details.

Hunting for black bears is challenging, but also can be rewarding. Hunters should try a variety of methods, including targeting areas of favored foods like huckleberries, blackberries, cascara trees, etc. Other methods include glassing clear cuts or alpine areas at times of dawn and dusk, as well as predator calling.



Photo by Kyle Cameron



## COUGAR

In 2015-2016, hunters took five cougars in the GMUs that make up District 10. Cougar hunting in this region is managed under a harvest guideline designed to harvest 12-16% of the population (excluding kittens) annually. The harvest guideline may be achieved during the fall hunt, and prospective hunters should visit the WDFW [website](#) to assure that the season in their prospective area remains open.

Most cougar hunting in western Washington occurs as an additional opportunity concurrent with deer and elk hunting. Hunters who want to harvest cougars should focus on areas with concentrations of deer and elk, choose to hunt following fresh snow for tracking, and may want to try predator calling.



Photo from Biologists Stephens, George, and Holman (WDFW)

## MOUNTAIN GOAT

The Goat Rocks/Tieton River goat hunt area has five special permits for the 2016 hunting season, and is one of the premier spots in the state for mountain goat hunting. Goat populations



in the area have remained stable at approximately 300 goats over several years. Hunter success in this unit is usually 100%.

In 2015, successful mountain goat hunters were required to bring the head and horns of their animal to the closest WDFW regional or district office for biological sampling within 10 days of harvest. This regulation is in effect for the 2016 hunt as well. Successful draw applicants will receive a letter with additional details.



Photo by WDFW

## UPLAND BIRD

### **Western Washington Pheasant Release Program**

Pheasants are released for hunting at three locations in District 10. These are located at Kosmos (Lewis County), Woodland Bottoms (Cowlitz County), and Lincoln (Lewis County). For more information about the pheasant release program in western Washington, visit the [WDFW website](#).

Youth hunters and those over 65 years of age should be sure to check the regulations closely for opportunities to hunt earlier in the season than other user groups.



Photo by WDFW

## FOREST GROUSE

District 10 supports substantial forest grouse populations and is one of the top producing areas for hunters in western Washington. Spring conditions for chick survival were good this year, which should translate into good grouse hunting this fall. Hunting riparian areas with mixed forest species and walking closed or abandoned roads are good strategies for grouse hunting.



Photo by WDFW

## WATERFOWL

Duck and goose hunting will be good this fall after the rains in November and December encourage birds to come south into the area. As of this writing, the results from surveys to monitor duck populations in 2016 were not yet available from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, but populations in recent years have been strong. See the following sources for information on North American waterfowl populations (2016 information should appear soon):

<http://flyways.us/>

<https://www.fws.gov/birds/surveys-and-data/reports-and-publications/population-status.php>

<http://www.flyways.us/status-of-waterfowl/pilot-reports>.

Hunters are reminded to consult the regulations pamphlet for details. Prospective hunters should take special note of the late September season open only to youth hunters. Check the regulations closely for the details on this mentored hunting opportunity for early season ducks.

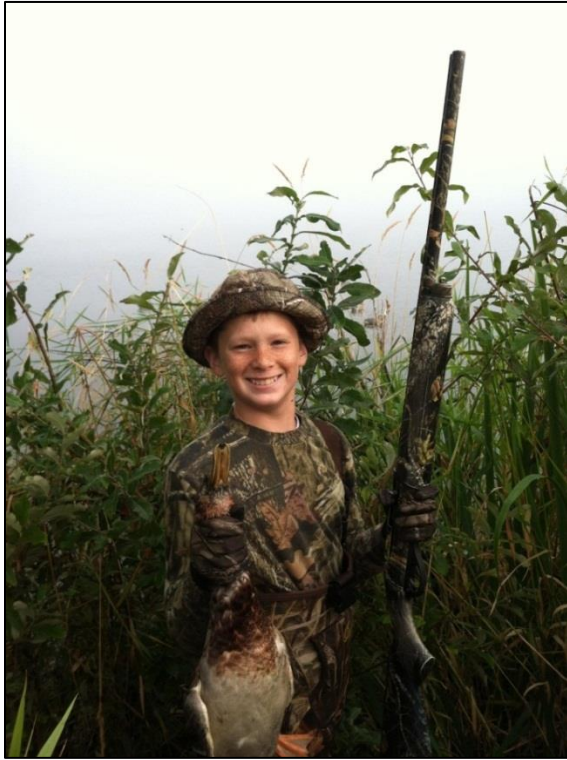
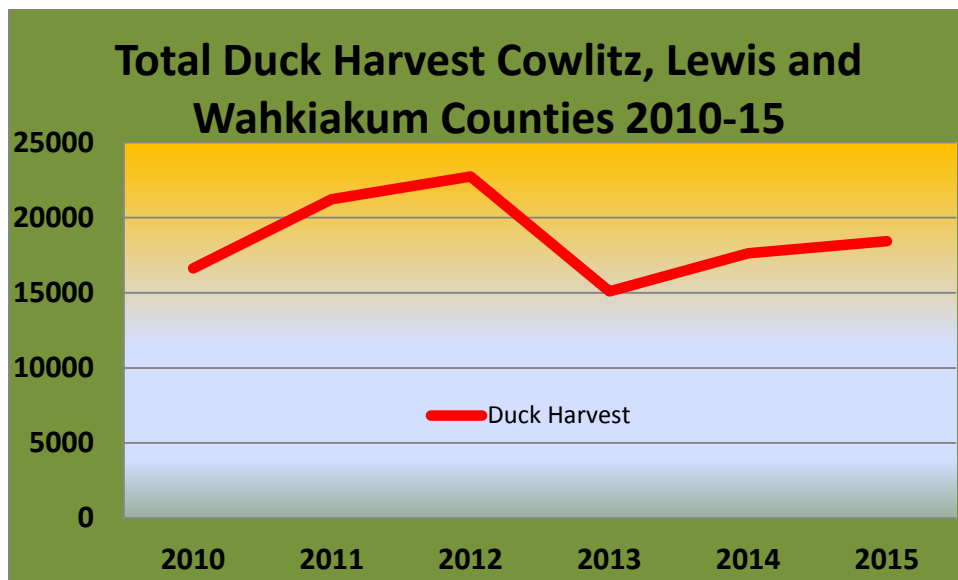


Photo by Keith Harris

Hunting early in the season is often best along the Columbia River and other large, permanent bodies of water. The Columbia River up to the Bonneville Dam is tidally influenced, so it is a good idea to watch for outgoing tide conditions to avoid having your boat get stuck. Later in the season, high water might disperse birds, and hunters may have more success by targeting flooded farmlands. More information about how to hunt waterfowl can be found on the Department's [waterfowl webpage](#).

Duck harvest in 2015 was 4,159 in Cowlitz County, 9,458 in Lewis County, and 4,813 in Wahkiakum County. The duck harvest in 2015-16 was up from the past two seasons. Prospective hunters should be aware that success often depends on the severity of fall/winter weather, with more severe conditions generally producing better duck hunting in southwest Washington.



**Goose Hunting:** Hunters are reminded of the complex goose hunting regulations in Goose Management Area 2 designed to protect wintering populations of the dusky Canada goose. New hunters and those who had their previous year's hunting authorization invalidated for Goose Management Area 2 need to pass an exam with a minimum of 80% to receive their current year hunting authorization.

### Significant Changes to Area 2 (Formerly Area 2A) Goose Hunting

Goose hunting in Clark, Cowlitz, and Wahkiakum counties is subject to the additional restrictions of Goose Management Area 2, which are in place to protect the dusky subspecies of the Canada goose. Goose hunters are encouraged to review the different subspecies of Canada geese in southwest Washington and are reminded that the ability to identify the different subspecies will still be the key to productive and enjoyable goose hunting.

For the 2016-17 southwest Washington goose season, the Fish and Wildlife Commission, in cooperation with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the states of Oregon and Alaska, approved the following changes:

- The season for dusky Canada geese is **closed** and hunters will be cited for taking a dusky Canada goose.
- Area 2A/2B boundaries have been combined and are now known as Area 2. Area 2 includes all of Clark, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Pacific and Grays Harbor counties.
- Southwest goose season hunting hours are extended to 30 minutes after the start of official hunting hours to 30 minutes before the end of official hunting hours
- Hunters are no longer required to record harvest or bring birds to check stations.



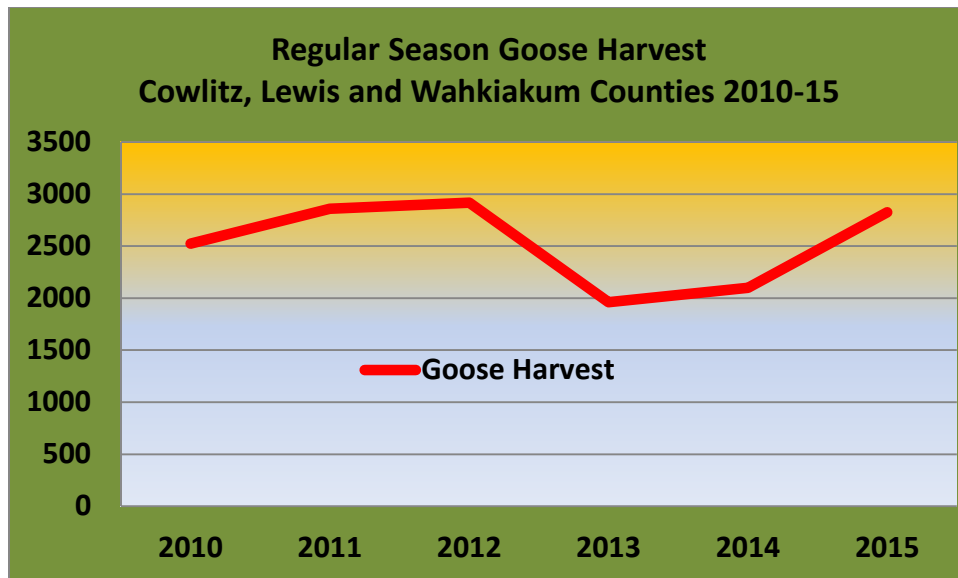
- General season ending dates extended to March (Late Season discontinued). All hunters can now participate in the February-March season, but only on private lands. No hunting is allowed on National Wildlife Refuges and WDFW Wildlife Areas.

Please review the revised [goose identification training program](#) prior to hunting this season, and see the 2016-17 WDFW Migratory Waterfowl & Upland Game Seasons pamphlet for more information. Wildlife managers are relying on southwest goose hunters to make this new season format successful so goose hunting will remain open in permit zones.

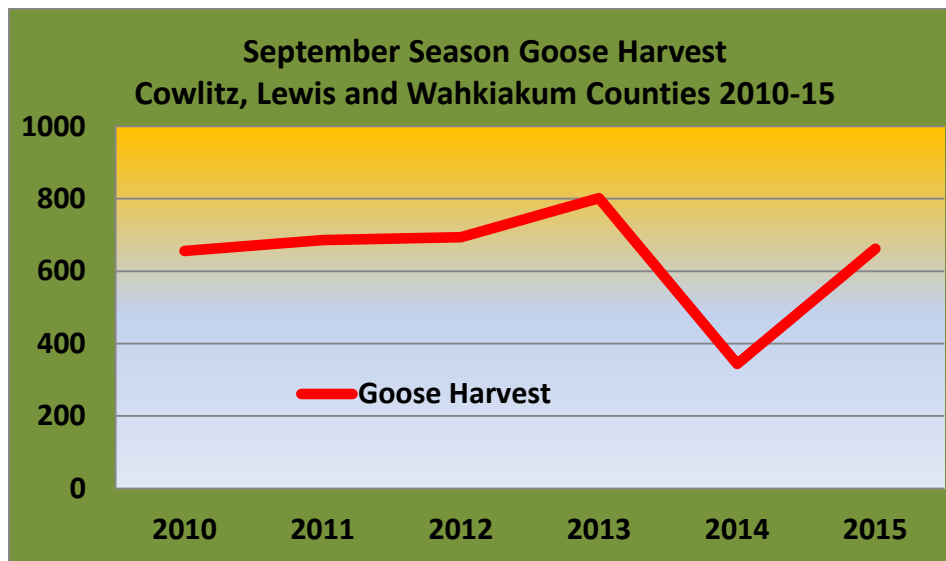


Canada goose nest in southwest Washington – Photo by Nicholle Stephens (WDFW)

While dusky Canada geese remain of concern, several other subspecies are abundant and support large annual harvests. Regular fall goose harvest in 2015 was 825 birds in Cowlitz County, 1,212 in Lewis County, and 788 in Wahkiakum County.



Goose hunters are also encouraged to take advantage of the early goose season, which takes place in September. See the waterfowl hunting pamphlet for details on this enjoyable goose hunt for western Canada geese. Harvest during the September season in 2015 was 70 in Cowlitz County, 496 in Lewis County, and 96 in Wahkiakum County.



## PUBLIC LAND RESOURCES

### **DNR-Pacific Cascades Office (SW WA)**

601 Bond Road

PO Box 280

Castle Rock, WA 98611-0280

Phone: 360-577-2025

[pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov](mailto:pacific-cascade.region@dnr.wa.gov)

Link to purchase DNR quadrangle maps:

[http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Maps/Pages/public\\_land\\_quadrangle\\_maps.aspx](http://www.dnr.wa.gov/BusinessPermits/Topics/Maps/Pages/public_land_quadrangle_maps.aspx)

### **Gifford Pinchot National Forest**

#### **Headquarters**

10600 N.E. 51st Circle

Vancouver, WA 98682

(360) 891-5000

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/giffordpinchot/>

#### **Cowlitz Valley Ranger District**

10024 US Hwy 12

PO Box 670

Randle, WA 98377

(360) 497-1100

#### **Mt. Adams Ranger District**

2455 Hwy 141

Trout Lake, WA 98650

(509) 395-3402

#### **Mount St. Helens National Volcanic Monument**

42218 N.E. Yale Bridge Road

Amboy, WA 98601

(360) 449-7800

Link to purchase ranger district maps:

[http://www.nationalforeststore.com/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store\\_Code=NFS&Category\\_Code=R6WA](http://www.nationalforeststore.com/merchant.mvc?Screen=CTGY&Store_Code=NFS&Category_Code=R6WA)

## **PRIVATE INDUSTRIAL FORESTLANDS**

### **Green Diamond**

- Recreation permits must be purchased for motorized and non-motorized access
- <http://www.greendiamond.com/recreation/FAQ/>

### **Hancock Forest Management (HFM)**

HFM Cathlamet Tree Farm

- Open for non-motorized recreation access
- Access hotline 360-795-3653

### **Pope Resources/Olympic Resource Management**

- Generally open to walk-in access
- <http://www.orm.com/Timberlands/PublicUse.aspx>

### **Port Blakely**

- Generally open to walk-in access
- <https://www.portblakely.com/pb-tree-farms/public-access-policy/policy>

### **Sierra Pacific**

- Generally open to walk-in, day-use access with select areas open for motorized access
- Access hotline 360-623-1299

### **Weyerhaeuser**

- Recreational access hotline-866-636-6531, recreation webpage:  
<http://www.weyerhaeuser.com/Businesses/RecreationalAccess/Washington>
- Includes St. Helens Tree Farm, Yacolt (Columbia River East), Vail, Pe Ell, Columbia Timberlands
  - Access is by permit only and permits can be purchased on the website above. Please see website for details including maps.
  - Permit required for recreational access year round
  - Motored and non-motorized permits available
  - Permits go on sale in May or June and generally sell out quickly